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Thoughts on Education

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Editorial Comment

"EDUCATION is everybody's business." This trite statement is partly true, since most of us pay for education either directly or indirectly and many of us have children in the schools. The widespread interest in education to-day, which often finds expression in criticism, is a healthy condition. However, all criticism is not equally valid, and criticism based on ignorance is often given more publicity than that based on knowledge and wisdom.

In this number of the *Bulletin* we do not propose to add to the spate of critical words. We do, however, propose to examine as objectively as we can what has been and is happening in education. Dr. Blatz and Dr. Northway ask and try to answer the question, "Has education progressed?" They do not take sides but attempt to evaluate what has been happening in our schools. Throughout these pages is indicated a faith in our educational institutions and in those who work therein. This faith is not complacency but is based on the belief that some of the fundamental issues are being recognized and that answers are being sought. That the authors also express some of their own ideas is a welcome addition.

The second section of the *Bulletin* is taken from *Well Children* (1955), now out of print. This is a description of the Institute's schools, where an attempt is being made to put into action our ideas of the educational process. If you read between the lines you will realize that although we have confidence in our goals we continue to learn how to manage the means to those goals. Above all, we are aware that we still have much to learn, and this awareness keeps us from doing things merely because they are new and different. On the contrary, we feel that the new must be evaluated quite as carefully as the traditional.

The final section of this issue appeared as three short articles on Post-War Education in the 1943 and 1944 numbers of the *Parent Education Bulletin*, the predecessor of this journal. These articles are reproduced here not only because we think they contain material of current interest, but also because they indicate the persistent problems of education which have been of concern to us at the Institute ever since its founding in 1925.

KARL S. BERNHARDT

Has Education Progressed?

W. E. BLATZ and MARY L. NORTHWAY

IT IS MORE THAN LIKELY that in the not too distant future historians of education will look upon the decade 1950–60 as the Educational Renaissance. During World War II and immediately afterwards, Western educators were keenly aware of the shortcomings in education, in Europe as much as in the Americas. The present-day tumult arose neither from sputnik nor by popular revolt but from the critical self-appraisal of the professional educators. Dissatisfied, they were throwing off the cloud of self-complacency that had settled in the school systems. Through the meagre research projects of the early decades of the century an awareness of inadequacy became more and more apparent.

The quarrel at first was internal. The university professors criticized high school standards (forgetting their own lack of preparation). The high schools condemned the poor teaching of the elementary schools, who in turn accused the higher schools of snobbery, inefficiency, and rigidity.

Gradually the fight extended beyond the classrooms and lecture halls. The parents, the uncles, the childless, and even at times the pupils, took up cudgels and belaboured each other: "Too many fads and frills"; "The children can't spell"; "Take them out of the classroom into life situations"; "Bring back phonics"; "Not enough discipline"; "Too much discipline"; "Get back to the old-fashioned 3 R's"; "Accelerate the bright"; "Socialize the slow"; and so on, indefinitely. Slogans were more common than ideas. Everyone who could read, and even some who could not, considered himself an expert in education.

There are two aspects of the problem which are frequently overlooked, even by thoughtful amateur critics.

First, there is a solid core of able, professionally trained personnel who are keenly aware of the shortcomings of a universal, democratically organized educational system. This group is responsible for the enormous progress that has been made over the last three or four decades. Anyone who asserts that no progress has been made is sadly misinformed.

Second, sound research in education at the beginning of the century was meagre and halting. Financial support was woefully lacking. After World War I there was a resurgence of research and a welcome increase in application of research findings, and, admittedly, experimentation without sound basic direction. Today research is a great deal more prevalent but still lags behind the needs of practitioners.

That there have been experiments that were absurd, ridiculous, and

extravagant is obvious. It is not to be wondered at that a movement, gathering momentum as quickly as did educational enterprise between the wars and after, should have acquired a lunatic fringe. After all there has to be something solid to which a fringe may be attached! When the fringe has worn off, the successful and worthwhile innovations have survived. To call everything that was *discarded* "progressive education" as a derogatory appellation is to miss the fact that throughout the land today, in little school houses as well as in consolidated schools, many techniques and patterns of teaching, and particularly the new outlook in the philosophy of education, stem from the much maligned "progressive" movement. To use "progressive education" as a derogatory term is to overlook the fact that much that is considered educationally sound throughout the country stemmed from this movement. The very fact that there is a mass activity of rebellious criticism is "progressive."

Has education then progressed? Of course education, as all of life, changes. A good teacher does not teach in exactly the same way this year as she did last year, nor is the school of 1958 identical with that of 1900. Nostalgic as we may appear to be for the good old days in education, most of us would be as startled to see our neighbourhood school a replica of one of a hundred years ago as we would be to watch our neighbours walk down the street dressed in costumes of that period. Indeed, in the United States where so much is being done to restore historical monuments, models of old-fashioned schools, such as the one in the Cooperstown Museum, evoke comments of amazement from visiting tourists. The school books are greeted with such expressions as, "Did great-grandpapa really learn to read from that?" or, "The children must have ruined their eyesight if they had to learn history from that kind of book."

Many of us are discontented with present-day education; we see its flaws and weaknesses, problems and perplexities, but no one, not even those who paint life in the little log schoolhouse in such glowing colours, really wants to go back. Nor *could* we. The log schoolhouse warmed by a glowing stove, set neatly in the midst of a city block, would be suitable only as a subject for a cartoon. The life of schooling at the turn of the century, so ably described by Mary Ellen Chase in *A Goodly Fellowship,* would be tolerated in 1958 neither by children nor by teachers, and certainly not by boards of trustees. The answer to our dissatisfaction with education cannot be to return to the good old days. The only possibility is to go forward: to progress rather than regress. Education has been advancing during the fifty-eight years of this century, and such progress has not been limited to any one type of school or any single form of educational ideology. Indeed, as indicated above, it is most unfortunate that the label "progressive education" has become attached to certain

forms of programmes, and more particularly to certain groups of people. Actually, progress has been made in conservative private schools, in experimental laboratory schools, in rural schools, and through the urban primary and secondary schools. In none of these would one find children being taught in exactly the same way as they were even ten years ago.

Why then, all the hue and cry against "progressive education"? If we have all progressed, we are all progressive. It is true that in our attempts to improve education we have made some errors. Instead of accepting these as an inevitable part of our own learning process, perhaps we have used "progressive education" somewhat as a scapegoat to which we may attach the blame for what we are reluctant to take responsibility for ourselves. Those people who call themselves progressive have undoubtedly shown a little more courage in their experiment, and indeed have been more vocal about their efforts than the rest of us. They have therefore put themselves into such a position that blame for what has gone wrong may be easily ascribed to them; the praise for what has been right is usually overlooked.

Many innovations were not introduced by the progressives at all, but emerged from conservative public schools honestly attempting to improve their programme. For example, the Dalton Plan was imported from England and first appeared in one of the most traditional private schools in Toronto in 1923. The plan for letting children proceed in learning according to their ability was a tremendous innovation. Likewise, one of the first places where "opportunity methods" were employed, was a public school in Toronto in 1927.

Every society, whether primitive or sophisticated, has some plan to bring up its young in the way that that society believes they should grow. When such a plan is formalized, we call it education. In every society, there are certain things which a human being must learn in order to function in that group. What are these things? How can the schools best teach him? There may have been a time when these questions were easy to answer. Answers have not been easy during the last forty years, for society has changed so quickly (and we predict this speedy change will continue) that it is very difficult for us to state exactly what we need in order to live in it, let alone what our children will need in the future.

It is revealing to read some of the books written about child life and education before World War I. *Period Piece: A Cambridge Childhood* by Gwen Raverat, a grand-daughter of Sir Charles Darwin, is startling in its revelation of the world of children at that time. *The Hill* by Henry Vachell, a novel of schoolboy life at Harrow in the early 1900's, just before the Boer War, is astonishingly old-fashioned. Some of the novels

of Vera Brittain and others who were writing in the early 1920's describe the golden age of Edwardianism as an era of long ago. The ideas of Sigmund Freud, which went off like an atom bomb fifty years ago, are no longer startling to modern ears. What *is* striking about them is the picture of the kind of life children must have led in pre-Freud times. Since August 14, 1914, society has been subject to a series of figurative earthquakes. World wars, depressions, scientific inventions and technology, industrial reorganization, atomic energy, and sputnik—these have made our age one of interest to historians, but one of tremendous confusion to those living in it. For with these objective changes, people's minds undergo a metamorphosis. Platitudes, ideals, standards, ethics, hopes, certainties, visions, have been in continual change. It is a tribute to man that he has merely been shaken by such changes, and not shattered.

We must not fall into the error of thinking that these last few decades have differed widely from similar changes in the past. At the time of the Renaissance people's minds must have undergone a similar shock treatment, as also at the time of the industrial revolution. However, never before has the burden of educating *everybody* been thrust upon the backs of a relatively small body of devotees—a small body which must train much greater numbers of frequently transient practitioners under the supervision of a relatively untrained group of trustees. It is small wonder that our education has been unable to cope adequately with the present, let alone predict the future. New ideas in any period take a long time to be introduced into the public educational system. When they are introduced too quickly they are accompanied by resistance. In a period of rapid change, it is impossible to keep education in step with progress. That is why so many of our educators are extremely frustrated, and being so, wistfully whine, "Let's go back to the good old days." Unless we can turn society itself back to an imagined golden age, a retrogressive education would become more incongruous than ever.

Is progressive education new? To answer this question, it might be well to review briefly a half-century of progressive education, the movement which is usually attributed to the ideas of John Dewey. In an essay, Max Eastman, his friend and pupil says, "John Dewey is a man who saved our children from dying of boredom as we almost did in school."* The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in its article on education puts it less succinctly:

> By 1900 the centre of gravity had shifted from the subject matter of instruction to the child to be taught. School in consequence had begun to change from a place where children prepare for life to a place where children live. . . . His [Dewey's]

*Max Eastman, "John Dewey," in *Jubilee: One Hundred Years of the Atlantic* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1957), first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* (1941).

doctrine about education is that education is life itself so long as the living thing continues to grow. Education is growth under favourable conditions; the school is a place where those conditions should be regulated scientifically. That is about all there is to it. . . . Dewey is slightly utopian in his rebellion against the old puritannical pumping-in system of education, but he does not believe, and never did, in consecrating children's whims, much less in forcing them to have more whims than are natural to them. He has more horse-sense than some of those who now run "modern" schools in his name.

Such a statement sounds fairly conservative in 1958, and well it might, for it was approximately sixty years ago that Dewey founded his experimental school in Chicago. Some of the more radical experimental methods were carried out by Mrs. Dewey, who, among other things, thought that on sunny, warm days children might learn if lessons were conducted in Jackson Park under the trees instead of at desks in their classrooms.

Ideas rambled out from Mr. Dewey's school and were introduced here and there throughout the country. Some of them were used with sincerity and effort; others, of course, were taken over in the letter rather than the spirit, and exaggerated into distortion. Many became favourite subjects of cartoonists, whose audience was a sceptical public, and whose motives may well have been anxiety lest these new creative children express more wit than they themselves were capable of understanding.

Gradually, some of Dewey's ideas penetrated Canadian schools: projects were introduced here and there; outings to museums and art galleries became part of the curriculum. New methods of learning to read and write, such as the "sight and recognize" method, were introduced. Teachers began to be assured that their interest in children as well as the curriculum was a desirable thing. However, it was not until 1936 that a new programme of education was introduced into the Ontario schools. In this the children were placed before the curriculum in order of importance and the qualities of heart and mind required for living in society became as important as the tools which were needed for the job. Since 1936, year by year, small changes have been made: one course of study replaced by another, more time given to subject A than subject B, but no sweeping revolution has occurred. That is, for 22 years our public education has remained on essentially the same platform. Whether one can call the 1936 reform progressive education is questionable, for public education is essentially mass education, to which the orthodox progressive stand was strongly opposed. However, it is this 22-year-old education that is at present the subject of controversy. Is it really better or worse than that which went before? This is a question that is impossible to answer. The first products of this method of education are the men and women of our country who are now in their thirties or

forties. Are we better or worse than people in their fifties or sixties? Who are we to say? Our present university students have all come up through the new education. They seem very similar to former generations, except that there are more of them. Children attending schools today obviously look at television more than those of a generation ago, but surprisingly, they also seem to be reading more per capita than they did in former years. The older people who experienced the new education also experienced World War II. How then, can we appraise what has been accomplished, and wherein education has succeeded or failed? There are no instruments by which we can accurately measure such matters.

There are two things which distinguish present-day education from that of all the previous eras. First, it must be an education which takes care of the *masses*. In Canada, not only are more children going to school, but these children are staying there longer than ever before, and in addition we assume that *everyone* is educable, even those whom we used to call retarded children. Present-day education has to teach all children, and it has to teach them a lot. There is more history to be learned, more complex scientific knowledge to be conveyed, and more people wanting all of this.

Second, present-day education is confronted with a rather uncomfortable fact: never before in the history of mankind has so much been known about the nature of the *creature to be taught*. Psychology is called a young science, but it is an octogenarian. It has not discovered everything, but of some facts it is certain. The way in which children develop and the means by which they learn have been fairly well analysed. The way human beings function and mal-function and the causes of either kind of behaviour are not matters about which there is now total ignorance. We do not know all the causes of mental illness, but we are almost certain that a child deprived of solid human relationships will not be very mentally healthy. We do not know the exact extent of fear on the physiology, but we know that a child who is terrified or even anxious through his school day will not emerge in robust physical or mental health. Psychological knowledge has seeped into all our schools. Schoolmasters may be unaware that what they are doing has been influenced by psychological discovery, but it is unlikely that even the most reactionary and conservative school takes no heed of the psychological fact of *individual differences*. No school system expects all children to progress at the same rate. To attribute all failures to lack of diligence or "ornariness" is not a common attitude. The fact that there are differences in intelligence and in speed of learning is generally accepted and incorporated by some means in the programme.

The heart of the whole problem seems to lie in integrating psychological knowledge of child development into mass education. How can the vast amount of knowledge about human growth and human learning be used in an educational system that is responsible for *every* child in the country? How can a teacher organize her classroom so that *each* of her forty children is being considered both as an individual and as a member of a group? The answer is not easy; we certainly do not know it. It will be discovered some day provided that we are willing to try to find it.

At present there are several attempted solutions to the difficulty. One is to pretend to be oblivious to psychological knowledge. Of course, no one can be truly oblivious without defining himself as an ignoramus. But a level of oblivion can be reached by brushing psychology off as impractical idealism, or a fad or a frill; by such means an educator can justify his stand in insisting on old-fashioned drill on the rudiments and the re-introduction of the strap. He knows, of course, that fear is stated to be a powerful agent in mental ill health, but by classifying such a statement as tommy-rot, he can justify his use of the strap as producing immediate apparent attention to a lesson. Such a solution may be called the ostrich method.

The second solution is one of distracting attention from this crucial problem to those of lesser importance; drawing a red herring across the matter, establishing controversy as to what are and are not frills in the subject-matter to be taught. (The non-frills are those which are of least expense and which can most conveniently be taught to the masses of students easily; the frills are those which are expensive and not essential to every child.) Or the red herring may be heated discussions regarding method: should there be projects or drill? individual choice or a regimented programme? should reading be taught by method A or by method B? should progress be marked competitively or according to attainment of standards?

A third possible solution is one which has rarely been mentioned in recent times because it would violate our basic principles of democracy: refuse to educate the masses and educate only the most educable. If only 5 per cent of the child population were accepted in schools, undoubtedly classes would be so small and teachers so well qualified that this 5 per cent would receive an education based upon the soundest of psychological principles. Some attempts in this direction have been made by setting up classrooms to minimize the differences among the children, and thus allow a teacher to teach all in much the same way. This has been done on the basis of I.Q. and mental age, and indeed also on the basis of social adjustment. Since a teacher does not here have to take

into account individual differences, he has a much more straightforward job.

There is a fourth solution: to continue our honest attempt to develop those ways in our schools which are consistent with the known psychology of children. A good teacher must know what he teaches: if he is teaching chemistry, he must know chemistry. But his teaching will be ineffectual, and indeed detrimental, unless he knows a good deal about *whom* he is teaching. The learner is an active creature who grows according to laws which are beginning to be well known. Insofar as it is possible to develop education on the laws of human development, we are going in the right direction.

As an Institute of Child Study, we see ourselves as a centre whose purpose it is to demonstrate some of the ways in which this can be done, and to try continually to do it better. If the knowledge we gain from our search cannot be applied in our own schools, to our staff, among ourselves, it is of little value. We fail many times, not always because we do not know enough, but because we do not know how to apply our knowledge in a busy organization that is moving on apace. We certainly have not found an educational system that is perfect, nor can we advise others to follow the identical ways that we have found to be satisfactory. Here, however, are a few of the established facts about human living and the ways in which we have attempted to incorporate them into our schools.

Fear is known to be the most dangerous form of motivation, not because it is ineffective but because it is too effective. Chronic fear is like a low-grade infection, continually lowering the mental health level of an individual. So, we have eradicated fear from our classrooms. As competition can too easily become a form of fear, we have set out to eliminate it from all parts of our programme except in games, where it legitimately belongs. No threats, no sarcasm, no feeling that the teacher will like a child less if he does not get his work done, no suggestion that he is not as good as the next child because his voice is not as true. This does not mean that fear never enters life at the school; of course it does, for fear is a part of all life. But we do not add deliberately to what life itself has already provided.

As a substitute for the indiscriminate use of fear under the guise of competition, a modern successful teacher uses her knowledge of the mechanism of learning as a guide post. Research in "Learning" marches apace and there are many theories concerning its detailed qualities, characteristics, and functioning. However, it is generally agreed that there are at least three aspects of learning which are of paramount importance

to the teacher: *Motivation*, *Capacity*, and *Persistence*. In simple language, a child will learn: when he wants to, when he is capable, and if he puts forth effort.

MOTIVATION

There are at least two faces to this aspect of learning: *interest* and *consequences*, the former inherent, the latter added to the situation by the teacher.

Interest. It is quite obvious that children learn when they are not in school. At cottage or camp or at home, they do learn. In fact, it is only in school that it has been necessary to introduce fear to make children learn. Taking a hint from the non-school area, we have come to see that a child in an environment rich in ideas and materials cannot be kept from learning. If a child feels that a teacher genuinely wants to help him learn, he will submit to the necessary drills, the routines, the tedious task, as part of the wise proceedings. Such a teacher is said to be inspiring.

Consequences. But the choice as to whether the child will learn or not is left to *him*. It is *his* decision to learn, not ours to *make* him learn. If he is obstreperous and disturbing, he has obviously chosen not to learn. The consequence of such a choice is that as the classroom is a place for people who want to learn, he will have to go off by himself where he will not disturb others. We do not beg him to come back, nor do we despise him if he stays away. The fact is that he soon *does* come back, because to learn is far more interesting than not to learn. The classroom is far more interesting and exciting than being alone.

CAPACITY

Children are not all the same. They differ in intelligence, in speed of learning, in personality, in various aptitudes. The fact of individual differences is basic to all teaching.

The basis for the class grouping at the Institute is chronological age; the age spread within a classroom is one year, and a class is limited to twenty or twenty-five children. Having thus ruled out differences of age, we expect our teachers to be able to consider variation among children, and to encourage each according to his capacity and motivating impulses. At the same time the teacher may show that the classroom is enriched by differences in personality, that every child, from the shy to the most aggressive, from the most athletic to the most artistic, has some contribution to make by which the group is enriched. The appreciation among children of each other's differences rather than of each other's similarity

is a basis for the establishment of most of the human virtues: tolerance, understanding, consideration, and appreciation.

PERSISTENCE

The most pressing problem today, as it apparently has always been, is how to get a pupil to "work." How often does a distracted teacher write on a report card, "Could do better work if he would only apply himself"? Of course he would! But how do we get him to do so? You can lead a youth to culture but you can't make him think!

Bribery, coercion, persuasion, diversion, have all been used, often to no avail. There is only one device that inevitably will function effectively, that is, the development of a feeling of satisfaction in a task well done, the expenditure of effort, not for its own sake (this is the cult of perspiration), but to get somewhere, something, some time. We must begin early to preserve this psychological phenomenon which can be observed in all infants. The use of artificial incentives, such as prizes, rewards, honours, medals, stultifies this experience because *these* then become the desired end and, if missed, cause the despair and disappointment of failure. Failure can and should be the spur to *greater* endeavour. The attitude towards failure is the basis of a system of values. We want our children to ask, "Is what I'm working for worth the effort?" rather than, "What does it cost?" or "What will people think?" or, "What prestige will it give me?"

Some teachers are able to foster, encourage, and strengthen this propensity in children. Once lost it is difficult to reinstate. That is why the elementary school is so important—not for the curricular content nor for the excellence of performance but rather for the preserving of a pupil's ability for sustained effort towards a meaningful goal. Given this trait, we need not worry too much about the others. Such a pupil will go forward to significant and outstanding accomplishment in *his* chosen field. He may not do well at examinations. Usually he has enough understanding to *pass.*

A teacher who gives the pupils the feeling that he *wants* them to learn, who appears unperturbed by honest mistakes, who approves of experimentation, can strengthen this feeling of satisfaction in his class. The children feel that he is *with* them not against them, that he is a helper rather than a faultfinder. Even in the university system a great many students think that the professors are doing their best to "pluck" them. Such an idea must have arisen in the atmosphere of learning in which they grew up.

The basic task of every school system in our Western civilization has

been to help teach children those skills which are necessary to our way of life. Our way of life is based on "word" and "number"; hence some skill in reading and writing and numbers is an essential requirement in schooling. Both conservative and progressive schools include these in their curricula; so do we at the Institute. The methods by which these subjects have been taught have been investigated and evaluated continually in all educational circles. We know that children progress in these subjects at different rates, that they are ready for them at different times, that the earliest reader is not the best, that the quickest reader is not the one who enjoys the world of literature most. Hence we have learned that a teacher must be concerned with Johnny's progress in terms of Johnny, and not in terms of how he compares with the other pupils. Also, we have learned to think of the three R's, not as ends in themselves, but as means, as tools for a job. The level a child has reached in reading is not as important as his confidence in books, enjoyment of words, the use of these in tasks he encounters, and his dawning awareness that through them he can open the door to the vast world of human thought.

But however confident we feel that we have learned *some* of the facts about learning and teaching, we know that there is a far larger area about which we know little. We would like to ask a few questions for which the answers are still nebulous or lacking. We would suggest that anyone who does *not* know the answers should not be too dogmatic about what should be done about education.

At each age what is the appropriate size of class for the most effective teaching?
At what age in an individual's development should various subjects, such as reading, algebra, calculus, economics, music, be introduced into a formal classroom?
Should all children, irrespective of capacity, be expected to learn to read, to write, to multiply? If the criterion of selection is not capacity, what should it be?
Should there be enriched, accelerated, or restricted curricula?
Is the modern high school curriculum based on vocational, avocational, social, or T.V. requirements?
Should teachers be paid less, the same, or more, than equally capable workers in industry?
Should education be wholly free—from nursery school age to graduate school?
Should schools be responsible for moral, aesthetic, and ethical standards as well as intellectual training?
Are teachers, artists, singers, surgeons, born or made?

The list could be extended. The interesting fact about these questions is that many people have opinions about them, but few have facts with which to answer them. That education will continue to progress is assured, provided that we remain courageous enough to ask such questions and sufficiently stubborn to insist on discovering more facts with which to supply their answers.

*The Schools at the Institute of Child Study**

THE STAFF

We believe that all children are educable and potentially creative; that there is ample room for non-conformity, which, interpreted as originality and inventiveness, would make for sounder progress than the competition of today; that we would and could be healthier, happier, and saner without sacrificing any of the worthwhile values we possess. We deride the widely held fallacies that genius must be eccentric, and that sanity is tantamount to mediocrity. To this credo the Institute is dedicated.†

Well children attend our schools. As the purpose of our research is to study well children, our schools must provide an environment in which health is not only maintained, but promoted. An environment which is designed to be beneficial to health may be described as salutary. To state that our schools attempt to provide a salutary environment is relatively easy; to achieve this in actuality becomes considerably more difficult.

It would be possible to give a philosophical dissertation outlining the qualities of a salutary environment. A more accurate impression of what we mean may be gained through a description of what we have been doing and thinking in our schools. It is, we believe, the process and not the product that produces a salutary environment—the ways by which ends are achieved, not the achievement, that demonstrates healthfulness.

In accordance with the Director's educational philosophy, all children are entered in school in their own age group. Each year the group moves up as a whole. Therefore no group has an age range greater than twelve months. Range in mental age may, of course, be over several years, and the range of skills and personality are likewise extensive. No child repeats a grade or skips a grade, except when from combined judgment of the Director and staff a child is held back or moved forward for some unusual reason. In two years, only three have been advanced, and one held back.

In groups formed on an age basis, it is important that teachers be able to provide situations of such breadth that each child will be able to function according to his own capacity, ability, and interest, and at the same time to develop satisfactory relationships with his age mates. Because learning to act and to accept the consequences of action are the core from which security is developed, teachers attempt to provide situations which allow for sufficient variability so that each child's action will lead to consequences which it is possible for him to accept. This means that the cur-

*Reprinted from *Well Children: A Progress Report* (Toronto: 1955, out of print).

†W. E. Blatz "Out of the Mouth of Babes," *Bulletin of the Institute of Child Study* (June, 1954).

riculum must not be rigid, but adaptable, and that the standard set for each child is to make an effort, not for all children to make the same one. At the same time, the classroom must enable children to develop a sense of trust, and an awareness of interdependence. Neither fear nor competition have any place. The teacher must be a person in whom the child has confidence, and the child must discover that life is enriched not threatened through his relationships with other children. He has his respect for them as unique personalities who, although they are not doing the same thing at the same moment as he is, accept his efforts, as he appreciates theirs. He does not have to be the same as the others to be accepted; he has to be himself.

There has been a great deal of talk about accepting a child for what he is. It is not an easy thing for teachers to do, for every educational institution and every teacher has values and believes that some things are better than others. In traditional education, the value emphasized was erudition. The erudite received prizes; the stupid received the strap. Later, the values were changed. For a while, adjustment to the group was set up as the primary good. Those who adjusted and were popular were considered better than those who were solitary or failed to be leaders. Sometimes other qualities have been considered the Ideal. Creativity in the artistic sense is greatly extolled at present. The creative children are encouraged, and those showing little of this quality are considered to be rather duds. Whatever the prevailing values are, the children who do not show them are sometimes frowned upon, and more often guided directly or subtly to be something other than they are.

It has taken us a long time to learn that any society, whether it be a classroom or a community, has individuals of different erudition, sociability, and creativity, and to realize that any social group requires its leaders and followers, its artists and its practitioners, its brilliant minds and those that plod more slowly. So too, we are trying to learn that it is possible in the classroom for the slower child, the shy child, and the less creative child, not only to feel he has a place as a valued member of this small community, but that in actuality his contribution to the group as a whole is as great as that of anyone else. It is most difficult to do this when we ourselves particularly value some aspect of human living. The artistic teacher has a difficult time accepting the fact that some child throughout the year has not caught her enthusiasm for the arts, and only gradually can she realize that his passion for mechanics may be an equally desirable asset.

A group is not developed through its members' being the same, but rather by their all being different. However, when people are living and working together, they have to agree on certain things and conform to the requirements or rules which are established. Requirements are made

for children, and not children for requirements. Common patterns of putting materials back where they belong, or being reasonably quiet in a work-room, of eating one's dinner sitting at a table, are not developed to restrict an individual, but are means through which confusion is avoided and by which each individual more readily achieves his own goal.

It is impossible for the very young child to set up his own requirements. He cannot schedule the time for outdoor play, or determine when dinner should be served. Adults therefore set the requirements, based both on what they know of children's needs and wants, and also on their knowledge of the over-all organization of a busy place.

Children have to be helped to learn to meet these requirements, through an orderly plan of discipline. Gradually, as the children grow older, they can have a part in discussing what the requirements should be, and in arranging how these should be worked out.

The purpose of conformity is not conformity for conformity's sake. Rather, rightly used, it enables the individual to be freer, and to experience more fully those situations in which it is worthwhile being unique.

We do not think of a salutary environment as one which is free from difficulties. If it were it would not be life-like. For in all living there are problems; the important thing is that the child learn to face them without fear, have time to deal with them and be willing to continue to look for new and better solutions. There are problems inherent in the process of growing up. Meeting new tasks, working out relationships, coming to decisions are matters that each generation has to solve itself. There are no ready-made answers. Though we may help children with the benefit of our wisdom, we cannot solve these things for them, nor would we want to. We want to give them time, opportunity, and help where it is needed.

In school there are difficulties in the tasks themselves. Reading may be easy at times; again it may become more difficult. And the child encounters tough problems in arithmetic. Learning to go ahead when the task gets tough is one of the situations which one must learn to deal with and enjoy. We consider that a salutary environment is one which leaves real difficulties to be encountered but enables the child to make the effort and to experience the zeal that comes from tackling them.

It has been real progress in humanitarianism that we have grown away from making things hard for the sake of making them hard; but this does not mean that everything naturally encountered in life which is hard should be removed. Years ago at a discussion on camping a speaker said, "We should put obstacles in the way of children," to which the reply was, "On any camping expedition, the good Lord has provided sufficient of these that we need not add to them." The core of the matter is, can children develop the strength to deal with the obstacles that life itself provides?

Unless a mind is well, it cannot learn; but it cannot be fully well unless it has the skills for living as a human being. A child must know how to live among people in his community. This means that in the Nursery he must acquire the skills of eating, caring for his person, and controlling some of his disrupting impulses. In the grades he must learn to use words and numbers. To do so requires a great deal of effort. We believe that the early foundations of reading and writing are extremely important. Learning to read in itself is not enough; the child must acquire the feeling of ease, comfort and enjoyment in this area of symbols, so that he grows to feel at home with his books. So we say that it does not matter how *soon* a child learns to read, but it does matter how *well*. Therefore, we do not hurry him before he is ready. We do not worry if a child is slightly below the level of the general population in the early grades. We hope, however, that in High School these children will not only come out well on achievement tests of reading ability, but will be spending much more time and experiencing far more enjoyment than many others in the world of letters.

Familiarity with words and numbers is important not only because the child needs them to live in our present world, but because they open doors into the whole universe of human knowledge and enable the child's mind to expand beyond the here-and-now. They are, as it were, the protein of mental life. So, we take our academic programme very seriously. Of course some of our children are better in academic achievement than others. How this is related to their mental health is in the foreground of our present research.

When children begin to read and write, and to think abstractly, they make many errors. Errors are not failures. Getting the wrong answer is usually inevitable before any of us reaches the right one. It is important in these early days that children develop self-confidence in making their mental explorations. They are meeting so many ideas and trying to put them together, that some of the results appear ludicrous to us. We must never let them appear either ludicrous or worthless to them.

The child who has not learned to fear being wrong in his ideational attempts will continue such attempts. If he has both confidence and curiosity, he will never live in a world in which there is little for the mind. Not being afraid of being wrong will enable him to approach problems where the answers are as yet unknown. He will not use his mind as a weapon to protect himself, putting on erudition as an armour, nor will he become pedantic. He will know that to split an infinitive may be erroneous, but that it is not thereby immoral. He will not be afraid to show his ignorance, because he will have no feeling of guilt about it. More important, he will not be afraid to reveal his wisdom. A willingness to accept the consequences of his mental efforts, whether they be right or wrong, develops. He trusts his own mind and he appreciates those of

other people. In brief we consider that a salutary school is one that has profound respect for the potentialities of children's minds and enables and encourages these potentialities to become realized.

We said above, that a salutary environment is one which allows the child to be himself. However, it is obvious that we do not sit back, letting each child just be what he is. We guide him towards what he can become, for we too have our values. We do not want to make every child brilliant or popular or highly creative if those are not the right things for him. We do want him to be well, though we have said we do not know what exactly comprises mental health. Since we are working with children, however, and bound to influence them, we cannot wait until research is complete before we dare do anything.

In every classroom the teacher is influencing children's development. In subtle ways, out of her own experience and philosophy, she is arranging opportunities for one child which differ from those of another. Knowing her children leads her to help Jimmy control his desire to be noisy when the rest want to get on with their work. Realizing that Janie spends most of her time by herself, she helps her take part in a group with congenial children. Being aware that Billy's intelligence is very high, she helps him discover the situations in which he can use it. She sees the children not only as they are, but as they may become, and influences them to follow their own best direction.

We have not defined the qualities of a salutary environment. We have tried to give an impression of what we have been doing and considering in our own schools. From this description it would appear that in our thinking of a salutary environment we have included the following ideas:

A salutary environment is one in which the physical arrangements are such that children can enjoy the maximum of freedom to live by their own efforts and where adult energy is not wasted in overcoming physical inadequacies.

It is one which has a natural feeling about it; one in which busy people respect each other's activities and enjoy their mutual associations.

A salutary environment permits each individual to retain his uniqueness and requires conformity only as it augments the well-being of the individuals. It avoids any set of rigid values which endows some individuals with a greater degree of worth than others.

It provides time and opportunity for difficulties to be dealt with and problems worked out.

A salutary environment is one which enables children to learn to use their minds with confidence and not fear the inevitable circumstance that they will be wrong before they are right.

And finally a salutary environment is one in which children are accepted not merely as they are, but helped to become what they can be.

Thoughts on Education Written Fifteen Years Ago

W. E. BLATZ

The following pages are reprinted from earlier issues of the *Parent Education Bulletin of the Institute of Child Study.** These pages speak for themselves. We were thinking then into the future. Some of the ideas expressed have been put into practice. Others may be tried out in the future. At least they indicate progress.

However long the struggle may continue, the present state of military affairs is such that the discussion of postwar reconstruction can no longer be considered wishful thinking. Each one of us has a plan more or less articulated with the possibilities of carrying it out. Each one considers a plan in the light of his own interest. Most of us, however, are interested in fulfilling the promises, however explicit or implicit, to the children of the world for a better deal than they have had. This seems to be one point upon which all adults will agree.

Whatever other plans one has in mind, the question of finance obtrudes itself at some point in the discussion. With reference to children, however, one does not ask "What can we afford for children?" but rather "What can we afford *not* to do for children?" By asking the question in this form we are revolutionizing our attitude towards children in general. To be sure, parents have in the past been willing to sacrifice to some extent for the future of their children, hence the founding of private schools, music schools, art schools, private summer camps and so on; but it is revolutionary for a people at large to think in terms of sacrifice for children at large. The needs of children must have the first call on the public purse and what is left can then be distributed among the other services.

Concentrating upon the needs of children rather than upon how little can be spent to do what seems to be the obvious, places us in a rather strange position because the exploration of children's needs has not been made a subject of universal inquiry and research. Research in industry, in transportation, in distribution, has been fostered and subsidized by governments and corporations. Research in child needs has been neglected, so that at the present time we can only surmise the solution of some of the problems. The first necessity for any postwar plan of reconstruction is the setting up in each province of research units on child needs.

In general, the child's needs may be subsumed under three heads:

*December, 1943; February, 1944; April, 1944.

Physical development, recreational and social development, and education. Obviously, the contents of these three headings overlap, but they may be discussed more or less separately.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

In this field we are on stronger ground than in the others because research in medicine has gone further than in the others. The new programme is divided into two plans, positive and negative. The positive programme of physical development provides for community-wide facilities for those environmental factors that make for the optimum physical development of the individual. (a) Housing—provision for fresh air, sunlight, and warmth in winter months, and sufficient privacy to provide adequate rest. (b) Nutrition—the development of school meals in England has demonstrated that even in an enlightened community parents need help and guidance for the proper preparation of children's meals. Feeding of children is as difficult a skill to learn as any of the highly developed modern skills in industry. Under the guidance of trained dietitians not only may the children be given a nutritious and balanced diet at midday, but through an educative programme the parents themselves may receive help and supervision of home meals. The objection that this plan might in some way or other imperil the fabric of the family has been proven false by the experience in wartime England, where the plan, already in operation for more than two years, is now accepted as a peacetime project.

The negative programme may be discussed under two headings—preventive and curative. The *preventive* programme has been developed to an excellent degree in some communities. Universal toxoiding of young children in some areas has almost wiped out diphtheria as a threat to children. With the growth of preventive medicine one might look forward to the day when the scourges of infantile paralysis, whooping cough, scarlet fever and other diseases may be controlled. The prevention of traffic accidents, although not strictly a medical problem, is, however, a matter which must be anticipated with the increase in postwar rapid transportation. *Curative*: Whatever plans are made for socialized medicine, provision must be made for the medical and surgical care and hospitalization of all children. The children of the nation must not be left to the mercy of the restricted potentialities of the individual family.

RECREATION

Only in this century have we begun to realize that recreation is not a luxury but a necessity. The exigencies of modern life place a strain on individuals which can be relieved only by regular and supervised recreational habits. The pressure of economic survival has overshadowed in our

training programme the need for learning how to relax. Learning is best done in childhood. No community lacks the physical requirements for annual supervised holidays for all children away from their homes. The training of the personnel for this supervision is in itself a stupendous task. The dividends which such a programme would repay in social adjustment would provide for the financial cost of such an enterprise, quite aside from the dividends in human happiness. Problems discussed under "juvenile delinquency" stem largely from the neglect in this field.

EDUCATION

There has been a good deal of discussion in educational literature in the past two decades as to the separate responsibilities of the home and the school towards educating the child. Should the school teach this or that, or should the home take on this function? Should there be religious education in the school? Should the school teach character formation or is this the function of someone else? In this article we are discussing the problem of education from the point of view of the child's *needs*. Usually when one separates responsibilities some important factors are omitted altogether and so we will pose our question thus: "How can we provide an educational background for the child so that he will reach maturity without some grave omissions?"

There are four aspects of such an educational programme. The child must learn (*a*) serenity, (*b*) conformity, (*c*) co-operation, (*d*) exploration. These four factors must be provided in both home and school and in the school throughout the whole period of instruction from the nursery school upwards.

(*a*) *Serenity*. From the very beginning a child must learn a technique by which he feels that he belongs to the community. This is largely an emotional experience and can develop only through an extension from smaller to larger groups. The first group is the small one made up of the family. Affection and consistent discipline both provide the background for the child's learning. As he grows up his social horizon expands and the school is usually the next important community group into which he is inducted. The faith and confidence which he has learned to extend to others must be carried on into this next situation. Any rebuff is bound to affect the child adversely; arbitrary measures of discipline, sarcasm, humiliation, and unfair competition all serve to destroy his faith and confidence. Serenity does not mean bovine contentment and is not inconsistent with enthusiasm, boisterousness, or even hilarity, because there are occasions upon which these experiences are legitimate and healthy. But suppression through fear and enthusiasm engendered through competition are emotional outlets which destroy any chance of developing

a serene attitude towards life. The importance of the nursery school as an introduction to later school life cannot be overestimated. Needless to say, the teacher must be serene.

(*b*) *Conformity.* Unfortunately, the need to conform to the social conventions has usually been discussed under the heading of "obedience." These two terms, conformity and obedience, *may* be synonymous, but obedience is usually administered as an unquestioned acceptance of the requirements of another individual rather than as a philosophy of mutual understanding. Hence, teaching a child "to obey" usually leads to grave difficulties.

Conformity, on the other hand, implies an acceptance of reasonable social demands which is one of the fundamental essentials for civilized life. Conformity should be taught under the heading of "routine." The child discovers that, if the requirements are minimal and reasonable, life is more comfortable but not necessarily less exciting. He learns to want to conform, rather than to rebel. But under such a scheme he does not accept all rules as inevitable and interminable. He develops critical judgment and learns that there are legitimate channels for changing the rules by democratic methods. The rules are guideposts and not fences. A guidepost may or may not be accepted if it proves to point in the wrong direction. A fence always challenges one to leap over it.

If a child does not conform he should be isolated from the community, since the rules apply only while the individual lives socially. If he wishes to withdraw from the community then he need not conform to the rules. Any other consequence leads to resentment and rebellion and a vicious circle is usually established.

In the light of the above a critical survey should be made by the educational authorities of the rules that have crept into the system and remained there through inertia. For example, rigid rules such as standing when answering a teacher in class serve no other purpose than ego-satisfaction on the part of the teacher, principal, or inspector. The reader may quite readily identify other such rules in the educational system which have very little rational basis.

(*c*) *Co-operation.* Co-operation in a social setting may be defined as the willingness to contribute to a group before accepting whatever privileges the group may offer. The give and take of social life is the most difficult habit for a child to learn. It can be learned only by practice and never by precept. Practice may be fostered in group activities such as sports; in the classroom the "project method" has come into usage. Unfortunately, the "project method" is frequently used by the teacher as a device for inducing the children to do something which can then be demonstrated to the parents and redound to the teacher's prestige.

Supervision of a legitimate project, inspired by the teacher but carried on by the pupils, is one of the most difficult tasks for the teacher to perform. In the later years such projects are best initiated in so-called extra-curricular activities. It is in this connection that the child learns responsibility.

(*d*) *Exploration.* Since the emphasis should be on learning rather than teaching, and on learning by doing rather than by rote memory, a classroom should provide the child with a background for wide experiment. A cut-and-dried curriculum militates against such an arrangement. The examination system makes for parrot-like regurgitation of predigested "facts." Usually these facts are beyond the comprehension of the child, and he succumbs to the system by making the best of a bad job. He memorizes in class and experiments outside. The younger the child the more need for a wealth of usable materials. As he grows older, books, pencils, paper, typewriters, pen and ink, brushes, can be used more freely because of the skill that he has acquired.

The chief aim in this connection is to teach the child to be sceptical rather than cynical. Scepticism always indicates a reasoned judgment. Today, high marks in an examination may indicate only weak-kneed acquiescence. The opportunity to explore can be begun in infancy; under our present system this early age is usually the only time in which a human being is permitted this privilege. With teachers trained in healthy scepticism, and with a wealth of material suited to the mental development of the children, and under the supervision of a benevolent and cultured inspectorate, the classroom could become not only a field for acquiring more skills, but a scene replete with potential fascinating adventure. The teacher should be the captain of a galleon and not the slave driver in a galley.

A PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL SCHEME

A comprehensive educational scheme takes into consideration (*a*) the needs of the child and the wants of the community and (*b*) the inexorable fact that there are wide individual differences in the capacities and interests of children. Keeping these two factors in mind, a proposed scheme for providing an opportunity for learning is set out on the following pages. The scheme encompasses the first 20 years of the child's life as well as the prenatal period. Parent education is envisaged as the first step.

The importance of direction during the prenatal and postnatal periods —by nurses, doctors, psychologists, and social workers—cannot be overestimated. Community clinics in which these four fields co-operate can be readily arranged even in the rural areas.

The child starts to school at 2 and enters an infant school which comprises a nursery school for children from 2 to 5, a kindergarten, and the first two grades of the present-day school. There are 50 children in the nursery school proper and 20 in each of the grade classrooms. The combination of emotional and social development with the beginnings of learning the arbitrary tools of civilization—reading, writing, speaking, and acting—is included during this period. Just as important, the assembling of children in the infant school provides an opportunity for health officials to organize a scheme of preventive medicine and promotion of sturdy physique. During this period repeated mental and aptitude tests are recorded and on the basis of these (which should have a high degree of reliability) the children are divided into four groups and proceed to four different types of educational institutions.

The first group will learn the arts and crafts as they apply to social living—music, dancing, handiwork, the routine of housekeeping and household crafts, and responsibility for simple routine activities. At the age of 12 these children will be apprenticed part-time in simple tasks such as messenger service, and part-time continue the development of social skills. At 16 they will be placed in full-time employment under supervision of social agencies in the community.

The second 7-year-old group, which will be the largest group, will enter vocational schools in which reading and writing, and later arithmetic, will be the basis of their programme. Through meaningful activities they will have access to such crafts as are available so that when they have reached the age of 12 they will have had an opportunity of developing special interests. At this age they are divided into two sub-groups.

The first sub-group will be inducted into trade schools for the skilled trades so that a pride in craftsmanship can be developed. The second sub-group will proceed at the age of 12 to a school for business administration, leading to the white collar jobs such as stenography, bookkeeping, salesmanship, factory management, and so on.

The third group, which will be an academic group, will at the age of 7 begin on academic subjects—languages, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic and so on. At 12 years of age they will proceed to a pre-college institution in the curriculum of which will be added the sciences and higher mathematics.

The fourth group, at the age of 7, will comprise the physically handicapped—the deaf, the blind, and the crippled. Instruction will be adjusted to their special disabilities and their inherent capacities.

At the age of 16 those students who have completed the business administration course can choose (*a*) to proceed into business, with the understanding that they are expected to attend evening classes for the

next four years, or (*b*) they may proceed to a semi-professional college where they may choose any of the semi-professional vocations that are available.

The pre-college group, at the age of 16, have three choices. They may go to the semi-professional college, they may enter a school for the higher professions of medicine, law, the ministry, or they may enter the humanities. The highest educational school, for postgraduate work, will accept students from the semi-professional, the professional, or the humanities.

From the postgraduate school the best trained students will be selected to enter the teaching profession.

This scheme, of course, implies a radical change from the present educational system, a scrapping of the enormous educational factories, and diligent research in modern school architecture; and it ensures that the teaching profession shall be recruited from the best "brains" in the country. There is one drawback—it will cost a good deal of money.

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